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Talking Points for the A/DDI
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Spain: The NATO Referendum

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The referendum last Wednesday was a decisive vote for continued NATO membership -- 53 percent in favor, 40 percent against, and 7 percent blank or spoiled ballots. Only 60 percent of the electorate voted, about 15 to 20 percent below the level of participation in other recent elections.

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Key factors in the favorable vote were:

--Gonzalez's personal popularity. Polls had shown Socialist voters to be almost evenly divided, but a large number evidently decided at the eleventh hour to support NATO out of concern that a referendum defeat could weaken Gonzalez or even lead to his resignation.

--Limits on membership. While anti-Western leftists agitated for withdrawal from the Alliance and Conservatives pushed for full integration, Gonzalez came out for a qualified membership. The referendum proposal rejected military integration, or any change in Spain's nonnuclear status, and called for a gradual reduction in the US military presence in Spain.

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The referendum victory is a defeat for the left and will reinforce the momentum of recent years toward increased Spanish security cooperation with the West.

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--It will permit Gonzalez to continue to quietly build Spain's ties to NATO through participation in NATO political and planning committees.

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Gonzalez's concern, however, with maintaining his domestic political position probably will make him reluctant to rapidly increase security cooperation with the West.

-- He is likely to shrink from placing Spanish forces under a NATO commander.

-- Gonzalez is also likely to push for at least a "cosmetic" reduction in the US military presence. After the referendum he said publicly that Foreign Minister Fernandez-Ordenez would pursue this topic with the US Secretary of State in May.

-- We also believe that the Gonzalez team will almost certainly prove as tough as its predecessors in renegotiating a bilateral base agreement -- the current one expires in 1988.

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